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Endymion

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ENDYMION

*In years that followed Selene's fall, the Moon
--the goddess Diana of golden hair--in noon
of the night would gaze on the slumbering earth and dream
of love beheld, of human love, and stream
her silver sheen across the fields and towns,
encrusting them in light. Her appointed rounds
brought to her eyes a sleeping shepherd. Fair
he was, and tall, with brown and curly hair;
he often in summer lay upon the slopes
and mingled in her heart with wanton hopes
his form. For night by night her soul did grow
into an ecstasy, and fiercely flowed
her pain when he, the youth, was not without,
beneath the stars.*

*All fear her love did rout,
and she then poured her heart like wine into
this vessel for her love. And each night through,
the sky was empty, barren of the moon's light;
the clouds sailed on in darkness; men in fright
then prophesied strange happenings; far more
the stars seemed bright. Diana stood before
the sleeping shepherd here on earth and gazed,
flooding with her light; she knelt and raised
his head onto her lap and gently kissed him,
nor deemed that days existed 'fore she wist him.*

*But laws of Jove were broken by this love:
the absent moon was noted from above,
and Jove on high Olympus called her there.
Enthroned in black, with mighty armor bare,
he sat austere and said: "This love shall die.
Your choice I give between his death and ay,
eternal sleep."*

*She chose at length the sleep
for her fair love; she chose to lay him deep
within a crystal cavern, on mossy bed.
The chamber's lit by secret fires unfed
by human hands: within the walls there bloom
and die the patterns of the flames. The room,
all warm, all temple-like, is where she prays
--when monthly vigil she will keep--the ways
of Jove will change, for love from laws set free;
and aye she dreams of days when this shall be.*

by J.R. Christopher